

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 071816Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3894

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 25962

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, US, MARR

SUBJECT: SECDEF CONVERSATION WITH FOREIGN MINISTER
SAUVAGNARGUES SEPTEMBER 29

1. FOLLOWING IS UNCLEARED MEMCON BETWEEN
DEFENSE SECRETARY SCHLESINGER AND FOREIGN MINISTER
SAUVAGNARGUES IN LATTER'S OFFICE MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 29,
1975.

2. EAST-WEST BALANCE OF POWER --
SECDEF BEGAN WITH STATEMENT THAT PREVAILING ATMOSPHERE
HAS BEEN CONDUCTIVE TO SLACK MILITARY EFFORT IN THE WEST,
BUT NOT IN THE USSR. THE SLOW EROSION OF THE MILITARY
BALANCE IN THE SOVIETS' FLAVOR IS STILL CONTINUING.
PERIL POINT HAS NOT YET BEEN REACHED, BUT CONTINUATION
OF TREND COULD EVENTUALLY GIVE SOVIETS MILITARY
PARAMOUNTCY. THE IMAGE OF AN ALL-POWERFUL USSR COULD
BRING ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICAL CHANGE IN EUROPE AND
MIDDLE EAST WITHOUT SOVIETS NEEDING TO UTILIZE MILITARY
FORCE. TO DATE, EROSION OF POWER BALANCE IN SOVIET
FAVOR HAS BEEN OFFSET BY SOVIET-CHINESE ANTAGONISM.

3. SAUVAGNARGUES RESPONDED THAT HE WOULD NOT QUESTION
SECDEF'S ANALYSIS. DETENTE MUST BE BASED ON A MILITARY
BALANCE. NO EROSION SHOULD BE PERMITTED. PRESIDENT
GISCARD D'ESTAING HAS SAID FRANCE WILL MAINTAIN ITS
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MILITARY EFFORT. IF FRENCH MILITARY FORCES ARE NOT

INCREASED, THERE WILL AT LEAST BE NO REDUCTIONS.
FRANCE WILL NOT RE-ENTER THE NATO INTEGRATED COMMAND,
BUT FRANCE REMAINS A FULL PARTNER OF THE ALLIANCE.

4. MBFR --

SAUVAGNARGUES SAID GOF IS CONCERNED ABOUT CURRENT TREND
IN MBFR. "ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT TAKE PART, WE BEAR THE
CONSEQUENCES." GOF'S MAIN OBJECTION IS TO THE PROPOSAL
TO CONTRACTUALIZE THE NUMBER OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN
EUROPE. GOF IS NOT WORRIED ABOUT ANY UNILATERAL RE-
DUCTION IN NUCLEAR WARHEADS, BUT CANNOT AGREE TO A
CEILING. A CEILING SHOULD BE LIMITED TO PERSONNEL
WHERE THE SOVIETS HAVE THE ADVANTAGE AT PRESENT. A
CEILING ON STRATEGIC WEAPONS HURTS THE WEST SINCE IT
HAS THE ADVANTAGE IN THIS AREA.

5. SECDEF REPLIED THAT PURPOSE OF MBFR IS GREATER
SECURITY FOR EUROPE, AND THIS OBJECTIVE MUST BE KEPT.
MAJOR FACTOR IS THE OBJECTIVE OF PREVENTING A MASSIVE
SOVIET FORWARD DEPLOYMENT. WE MUST REDUCE THIS SOVIET
CAPABILITY OR MBFR IS NOT REALLY WORTH THE EFFORT.
IN THIS CONTEXT, SAUVAGNARGUES ASKED IF REDUCTION OF
2,000 SOVIET TANKS WOULD REALLY PROVIDE GREATER SECURITY
TO THE WEST. THERE MIGHT BE AN ARGUMENT FOR BEING
TOUGHER WITH THE SOVIETS AT THIS POINT SINCE "THE WEST
GAVE THE SOVIETS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY THEY WANTED
AT HELSINKI." IF SOVIETS WANT TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM OF
THEIR DETENTE IMAGE, WEST SHOULD TELL THEM THAT A
RATIO OF 16,000 TO 5,000 TANKS MAKES NO SENSE.
SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THERE IS ALSO STRONG ARGUMENT FOR
REJECTING SPECIAL ZONES IN EUROPE. WHAT IS DONE IN A
SINGLE ZONE DOES NOT REALLY AFFECT THE MILITARY BALANCE.
THE AMERICANS MUST RETREAT ACROSS THE ATLANTIC WHILE
THE USSR RETREATS ONLY 200 KILOMETERS. SECDEF REPLIED
THAT WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE SOVIET PROBLEMS IN
MOVING TANKS BACK TO WEST FROM THE SOVIET UNION. THE
PROBLEMS ARE SUCH THAT WE WOULD HAVE EARLY WARNING OF
ANY SUCH MOVEMENT. AS FAR AS ATLANTIC IS CONCERNED,
U.S. WANTS TO BE IN POSITION TO MOVE FORCES BACK
WITHIN 30 DAYS, FLYING ONE DIVISION ACROSS EVERY
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THREE DAYS.

6. FLEXIBLE RESPONSE --

SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THAT WHILE FIRST PRIORITY IS TO
MAINTAIN THE STRATEGIC BALANCE, SECOND IS TO DETER ANY
ATTACK, NO MATTER HOW SMALL, ON GERMANY. "WE MUST NOT
GIVE THE SOVIETS A GUARANTEE THAT A LIMITED ATTACK
WOULD NOT RECEIVE A TAKNUKE RESPONSE. WE HAVE THE

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FEELING THAT UNDER THE DOCTRINE OF FLEXIBLE RESPONSE, THE SOVIETS HAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT WEST'S FIRST RESPONSE TO A CONVENTIONAL ATTACK WILL BE CONVENTIONAL. IF WE LOSE THE FIRST ROUND, WE MAY FIND OURSELVES WIT/H NO FURTHER RECOURSE. SOVIETS MUST REALIZE THAT THEY ARE THE FIRST TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO NUCLEAR RETALIATION", SAUVAGNARGUES SAID.

7. SECDEF SAID THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN SOVIETS IN A STATE OF UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT. SOVIETS KNOW THAT WE WILL RESPOND TO CONVENTIONAL ATTACK WITH CONVENTIONAL RESPONSE, BUT THEY ALSO REALIZE THAT WEST WILL USE WHATEVER FORCE IS NECESSARY TO STOP THEM FROM ACHIEVING THEIR OBJECTIVE. SOVIETS DO NOT HAVE ANY REAL GUARANTEES ABOUT NATURE OF WESTERN RESPONSE, THEREFORE.

8. STANDARDIZATION IN NATO --

SAUVAGNARGUES ASKED SECDEF IF HE HAD CONCEPT OF A GENERAL AGREEMENT WITHIN NATO ON STANDARDIZATION. SECDEF RESPONDED THAT EMPHASIS SHOULD BE ON MAKING PROGRESS TOWARD AN EVENTUAL GENERAL AGREEMENT THROUGH THE MECHANISM OF SPECIFIC CASES OF MUTUAL PURCHASES OF EQUIPMENT. SECDEF SAID STANDARDIZATION IS A PRACTICAL PROBLEM AS WELL AS A THEOLOGICAL ONE. A GRAND SCHEME WITHOUT SPECIFIC SMALL STEPS SHOWING PROGRESS CAN ONLY GENERATE SCEPTICISM. SAUVAGNARGUES SAID THAT GOF IS

WILLING TO LISTEN TO ALL IDEAS ON STANDARDIZATION, BUT
DOES NOT WANT TO BE CRUSHED BY AMERICAN INDUSTRY.

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FRANCE MUST MAINTAIN ITS OWN ARMS INDUSTRY. SECDEF
RESPONDED THAT ROAD TO BEING CRUSHED INDUSTRIALLY IS
PAVED WITH UNDULY HIGH PROTECTIONISM. THE ABSENCE OF
FOREIGN COMPETITION, OF WHICH THE U.S. HAS BEEN AS
GUILTY AS ANYONE ELSE, RESULTS IN LESS EFFICIENT HIGH
COST EQUIPMENT BEING SUPPLIED TO THE ARMED SERVICES.
THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CONCEPT OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION
SHOULD APPLY TO THE ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY AS WELL. UN-
FORTUNATELY, FRENCH HAVE TOO OFTEN IDENTIFIED THEIR
NATIONAL ARMAMENTS INDUSTRY AS EUROPEAN WHICH IS NOT
THE CASE. THE KEY ELEMENT OF STANDARDIZATION FOR THE
ALLIANCE, SECDEF CONCLUDED, IS TO SUPPLY THE BEST
EQUIPMENT AT THE LOWEST COST, AND TO OVERCOME PAROCHIAL
CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT WHICH COMPANY GETS THE CONTRACT.
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